



The Main Feature

Season 44 – Issue 13 – Screening 27 March 2025

All of Us Strangers

UK 2024, 101 min Cert 15

Director Andrew Haigh
Writer Andrew Haigh, from the novel
Strangers by Taichi Yamada
Music Emilie Levienaise Farouch
Cinematography Jamie Ramsay
Editing Jonathan Alberts
Production Sarah Finlay
Design

Cast

Andrew Scott	Adam
Paul Mescal	Harry
Carter John Grout	Young Adam
Jamie Bell	Dad
Claire Foy	Mum
Ami Tredrea	Waitress



Adam (Andrew Scott) is a middle-aged man who appears solitary. He has a flat in a brand-new tower block in London, which is otherwise unoccupied except for one other flat where Harry (Paul Mescal) lives. Harry and Adam are thrown together and begin a relationship.

Adam's occupation as a writer, living in his head as much as the real world, adds to his privacy. Looking at some of his memorabilia (photographs, a cigarette lighter, a Christmas tree fairy) he is drawn back to his childhood in the London suburbs. He returns to his childhood home, but the Southern railway miraculously takes him through time as well as space so that as an adult he can meet his parents (Claire Foy and Jamie Bell) who were both killed in a car accident when he was 11 years-old. The conversations with his parents – who are still at the age when they died – are central to the film. His parents' attitudes reflect those of the 1980s, a time when society was far less



accepting of homosexuality, particularly in light of the deepening Aids crisis, a disease many at the time mistakenly thought almost exclusively affected gay people.

Interviewed by the BBC¹, the director Andrew Haigh said 'More than anything, it's about someone looking back into the past to understand how to move forward, and have

conversations with the past as a way to feel more secure in the world.' He added: 'It's not the visceral pain of immediate grief and loss. I wanted to talk about pain across the board, all of the sort of difficulty and trauma and loss that you all experience throughout your life. Any kind of loss, whether it's through death or divorcing parents, the breakdown of a family, a close friend that moves away, whatever it might be, there are these things in our life that leave an imprint. They are always there and they bubble away, they grow and they exist forever. And you have to sometimes look back at them, and find a way to speak to them and uncover them again, because you need to as you go forward in your life, it doesn't vanish.'

Haigh said it was important to have a gay actor such as Scott play the leading role: 'I wanted someone who I knew was a brilliant actor who could go through some very difficult emotional transitions in this film. But I also did want someone who was gay and who could understand the nuance of that stuff that's being talked about under the surface or in the edges of the story. It's an interesting thing that a lot of gay people have to go through. And it's hard to explain you had something within you that you felt may separate you from your parents and they'd reject you for it.' He wanted to cast an actor who 'understood on a visceral level the fear of having to come out, the fear of rejection, the fear of growing up in the shadow of Aids, all the things that affected a generation of queer people.'

The critics were favourable. Empire said 'Loneliness engulfs this film. Adam is traumatised: by a childhood in which he was bullied; by the death of his parents when he was 11; by a less enlightened, less compassionate era; and by coming of age in the 1980s – with the spectre of AIDS inhibiting him even further. Sometimes, his trauma plays out like a nightmare. Throughout *All of Us Strangers*, dreams, memories, fantasies and reality collide and blur. It's all the same here, in Andrew Haigh's desperately sad but gorgeous odyssey: a warm blanket of a film, and a tender portrait of a fragile man.'

The Guardian agreed: 'On an initial viewing, it's the picture's wrenching emotional impact that strikes most emphatically – during the first screening I attended, the whole row of seats shook from the collective sobs of fellow film critics. But on a second viewing, you start to fully appreciate the immaculate craft of the picture. The way the score, by Emilie Levienaise Farrouch, harmonises with and complements intricate use of sound; the skill of Jonathan Alberts's fluid editing that, with the lightest of touches, guides us between parallel timelines and a cityscape that throngs with coexisting moments from Adam's life. It's a remarkable achievement – a raw and potent piece of storytelling that grabs you by the heart and doesn't let go.'



This film will leave an impression on you, in part from the fine performances of the four characters, but also from the ambience created by director Andrew Haigh, especially the sound track (and I don't just mean the music).

Michael Hipkins

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-67758544>

Gene Hackman

Gene Hackman died last month, aged 95. He was widely mourned by film makers and audiences alike. Here is a selection of his (mainly) award-winning films.

Bonny and Clyde (1967, director Arthur Penn). The film's tag line was 'We rob banks.' Hackman plays Buck Barrow, Clyde's older brother, who is killed in an ambush by law enforcement officers. Hackman received an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor.



The French Connection (1971, director William Friedkin). The first of two films starring Hackman as Jimmy 'Popeye' Doyle, who pursues wealthy French heroin smuggler Alan Charnier (Fernando Rey). Friedkin was influenced by the documentary style of *Z* (1969), the film by Costa Gavras about a political assassination. The film won five Oscars, including Best Actor for Hackman.

The Conversation (1974, director Francis Ford Coppola). Hackman plays Harry Caul, a surveillance expert. The first scene is a three-minute overhead shot of a square, gradually getting closer as the sound track picks up fragments of conversation. Caul thinks he does not care how his client's use the information he gathers, but later his conscience pricks him over what he hears. A stellar performance by Hackman but which – inexplicably – did not lead to an Oscar nomination, though it did make the BAFTA and the Golden Globes nominations, but without winning.



Unforgiven (1992, director Clint Eastwood) A revisionist Western, starring Eastwood himself as William Munny, an aging outlaw and killer who takes on one more job years after he turned to farming. Hackman plays Sheriff 'Little' Bill Daggett. The film deconstructs the morally black-and-white vision of the American West; and some have seen parallels with Homer's *Iliad*. The film won four Oscars, with Hackman receiving the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

The Royal Tenenbaums (2001, director Wes Anderson). A comedy drama, with Hackman playing against type as the patriarch Royal O'Reilly Tenenbaum of the dysfunctional Tenenbaum family. In an ensemble cast, Hackman won the Golden Globe for Best Actor – Musical or Comedy.

Michael Hipkins



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Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by

Wednesday 2 April 2025

Discs of previous shows are available to hire for a modest fee.

Comments and reactions to: **Slow**

No of reaction slips received = 26

Average score = 5.54

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	~	~	1	3	2	7	7	2	2	2	~

As the name suggests: it is slow. An unusual film which treats a different view of love with sympathy

Excellent camera work. Excellent at showing the deaf world. An excellent film, well-acted

Very slow – like watching paint dry

Slow by name, slow in action!

So, so different and so, so interesting – thought-provoking, poignant

Apt title. Early part soporific and tea interval appreciated. A serpentine plot that never seemed to end ... did it begin?

Heart-warming and heart-breaking in equal measure

No comment on this film. Not my kind of film, but well-acted

Lived up to the name!

Well done to the team in sorting out the equipment but shame the film rather lived up to its name! Slow ...

An interesting film, tracing the ins and outs of a relationship

Some imaginative cinematography

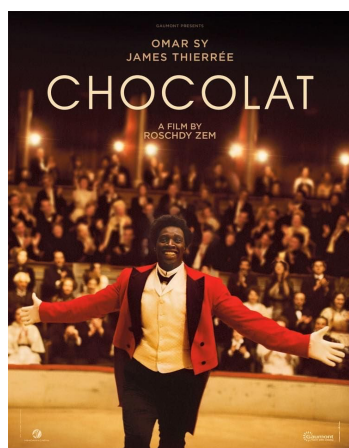
Intriguing premise and a fascinating lead actress but too slight. Ending was more like a “hard stop” and was a real let-down

Slow by name, slow by nature – I started to think through my shopping list

Well filmed and decently acted, but the topic was too esoteric, and the film essentially relied, for interest, on one topic. As a result it was of limited interest and pretty slow. As can be seen from the reactions recorded this season so far, your audience wants deeper interest and entertainment than this film could provide. I wouldn't watch it again

Position	Film	Average score
1	One Life	8.80
2	Maudie	7.97
3	The Great Escaper	7.96
4	Wicked Little Letters	7.66
5	The Holdovers	7.62
6	Anatomy of a Fall	7.22
7	The Taste of Things	7.16
8	The Color Purple	6.77
9	Past Lives	6.46
10	Winners	5.88
11	Barbie	5.59
12	Slow	5.54

Forthcoming attraction: 10 April 2025 – **Chocolat**



[A] lavish and increasingly involving study of fin-de-siècle racism. Guardian

Zem's spirited evocation of Paris bohemia, fin-de-siècle style, has turned the film into a box-office hit in France, as well as exciting debate about race relations. Sydney Morning Herald

Chocolat is a film that travels from raucous to heart-breaking and back again more than once. It is an engaging, entertaining, angering and mostly very admirable couple of hours. The Post (NZ)